

Original Article

Discipline Stratagems of Teachers and Social Glitches of Students in Public Elementary Schools

Grace Cabrera ¹, Josephine Baguio ^{1,*}

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Abstract

This quantitative correlational study examined the relationship between teacher discipline stratagems and student social difficulties among 139 public elementary teachers in Boston District, Davao Oriental, during the school year 2022 to 2023. Using a validated 40-item questionnaire, the study measured key domains such as discipline with dignity and examination stress. Data were analyzed using means, Pearson product moment correlation, and regression analysis. Results indicated that both discipline stratagems and student social difficulties were highly extensive overall, each obtaining a mean of 4.14. Notably, discipline with dignity and examination stress were the highest-rated domains. The study revealed a strong, significant relationship between discipline stratagems and student social difficulties. Regression analysis further confirmed that discipline stratagems significantly influence these social difficulties. Ultimately, these findings highlight the strong link between discipline practices and perceived student social difficulties, underscoring the critical need for supportive, relationship-based, and context-sensitive classroom management programs in public elementary schools.

¹ Graduate School,
Rizal Memorial
Colleges, Inc., Davao,
Philippines
* Correspondence:
josephinebbaguio@ou
tlook.com

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1. Introduction

Classroom discipline remains a central concern in elementary education because it directly shapes the conditions under which children learn, interact, and develop social habits. In classrooms with young learners, discipline is not only a mechanism for order; it is also a pedagogical process through which teachers model fairness, respect, responsibility, and self-regulation. When discipline is reduced to punishment alone, it may control behavior in the short term but fail to help pupils understand expectations, repair harm, or take responsibility for their actions. Contemporary literature on classroom management therefore emphasizes proactive routines, positive relationships, clear expectations, and teacher responses that protect student dignity while keeping the learning environment safe.

The term discipline stratagems in this study refers to the intentional practices used by teachers to guide student behavior in school. These practices include discipline with dignity, responsibility, exercise break, and reward for good behavior. Discipline with dignity reflects calm and private correction, respectful dialogue, and teacher actions that preserve a child's sense of belonging. Responsibility refers to the use of tasks, roles, assignments, and leadership opportunities that allow students to take ownership of behavior and learning. Exercise break pertains to structured physical activity used to refresh attention and reduce restlessness. Reward for good behavior refers to positive reinforcement for obedience, honesty, punctuality, cooperation, and respect.

These domains align with evidence that effective classroom management requires more than rules and sanctions. In their meta-analysis, Korpershoek et al. (2016) found that classroom management strategies and programs had positive effects on students' behavioral, social-emotional, and academic outcomes, especially when interventions used preventive and structured approaches. Karasova and Nehyba (2023) likewise emphasized that student-centered teacher responses, such as calm communication, active listening, and respect for learner autonomy, can reduce behavior problems while strengthening classroom climate. These studies support the premise that discipline works best when teachers combine clear expectations with humane and relational responses.

Student social difficulties also require attention because they often appear in school as inattentiveness, conflict, avoidance, stress, absenteeism, or poor peer relations. In the present study, these difficulties are framed through four domains: family problems, examination stress, financial difficulties, and relationship difficulties. These domains acknowledge that behavior in school is rarely a purely classroom based concern. A child who experiences family conflict, health concerns, hunger, poverty, lack of sleep, bullying, or strained relationships may manifest social or behavioral challenges that require teacher sensitivity rather than mere punishment.

International evidence points to the value of supportive teacher relationships for student adjustment. Allen et al. (2018) showed that teacher support is among the strongest school level contributors to students' sense of belonging. Quin (2017) found

that better teacher-student relationships are associated with stronger school engagement. In similar terms, AERO (2023) noted that positive teacher-student relationships help create safe, predictable, and supportive classrooms where students feel understood and appreciated. These findings are important for elementary schools because pupils in this age group often rely heavily on adults to interpret expectations, regulate emotions, and manage conflict.

At the same time, exclusionary or harsh discipline can carry risks. Cribb Fabersunne et al. (2023) reported that exclusionary school discipline is associated with negative educational and developmental outcomes, including missed instruction and academic disengagement. Although the present study does not examine suspension or expulsion, this literature is relevant because it clarifies why supportive discipline stratagems are preferable to purely punitive responses. Schools that attend to behavior without addressing the child's social context may miss the underlying conditions that drive repeated misbehavior.

In the Philippine public school context, teachers often function not only as instructors but also as frontline responders to learner welfare concerns. In elementary schools, teachers may observe early signs of distress related to family, finances, examination pressure, or peer relations before these concerns become formal guidance cases. The teacher's discipline approach can either worsen the learner's experience through humiliation and fear or provide a pathway toward support, responsibility, and inclusion. This makes the relationship between discipline stratagems and student social difficulties a meaningful area for empirical inquiry.

This study examined the extent of discipline stratagems of teachers and the level of student social difficulties in public elementary schools in Boston District, Division of Davao Oriental. It also tested whether teacher discipline stratagems were significantly related to student social difficulties and whether domains of discipline stratagems significantly influenced student social difficulties. By focusing on teacher reported data from a district setting, the study contributes local evidence on how classroom discipline practices and learner social concerns intersect in public elementary education.

2. Methodology

The study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design using the correlational method. This design was appropriate because the purpose was to describe the extent of teacher discipline stratagems, determine the level of student social difficulties as perceived by teachers, and examine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the two variables. No treatment, intervention, or experimental manipulation was introduced. The design allowed the researcher to measure naturally existing perceptions within public elementary schools and to analyze the degree of association among quantifiable variables.

The respondents were 139 teachers from public elementary schools in Boston District, Division of Davao Oriental. Universal sampling was used, which means that all teachers within the covered population who met the inclusion criteria were considered respondents. The teachers had served in the public school system for at least three years, which provided them with sufficient classroom and school exposure to evaluate both discipline practices and student social concerns. The study was conducted during school year 2022 to 2023.

Data were collected through a researcher made questionnaire developed from literature on discipline practices and student social concerns. The instrument contained 40 items divided into two major parts. The first part measured the extent of discipline stratagems of teachers across four indicators: discipline with dignity, responsibility, exercise break, and reward for good behavior. The second part measured student social difficulties across four indicators: family problems, examination stress, financial difficulties, and relationship difficulties. Each indicator contained five items, producing a balanced structure across the eight measured domains.

The questionnaire used a five point Likert scale. For discipline stratagems, mean scores from 4.20 to 5.00 were interpreted as very highly extensive, 3.40 to 4.19 as highly extensive, 2.60 to 3.39 as moderately extensive, 1.80 to 2.59 as low extensive, and 1.00 to 1.79 as very low extensive. For student social difficulties, mean scores from 4.20 to 5.00 were interpreted as very high, 3.40 to 4.19 as high, 2.60 to 3.39 as moderate, 1.80 to 2.59 as low, and 1.00 to 1.79 as very low. These interpretive ranges were used to classify both item level and domain level findings.

Content validation was conducted with the assistance of the adviser and three validators who reviewed the questionnaire for relevance, clarity, and coverage. Pilot testing was conducted with 30 respondents from Don Salvador Lopez National High School. The pilot test produced a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .793, which indicated acceptable internal consistency for the instrument. After validation and pilot testing, the final questionnaire was administered to the target respondents.

Permission to conduct the study was secured through formal communication with the concerned academic and school authorities. Copies of the questionnaire were prepared clearly to avoid difficulty during administration. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents and requested honest responses to support the validity of the findings. The retrieval rate was 100 percent. After retrieval, the responses were collated, encoded, tabulated, and submitted to statistical treatment.

The mean was used to determine the extent of discipline stratagems of teachers and the level of student social difficulties. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the significant relationship between discipline stratagems and student social difficulties. Regression analysis was used to determine whether domains of discipline stratagems significantly influenced student social difficulties. The null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

3. Results

As shown in Table 1, discipline with dignity had the highest domain mean ($M = 4.16$), followed by responsibility ($M = 4.14$), reward for good behavior ($M = 4.13$), and exercise break ($M = 4.12$). The overall mean was 4.14, described as highly extensive.

Table 1. Summary of discipline stratagems among public elementary school teachers.

Domain	Mean	Descriptive level
Discipline with dignity	4.16	Highly Extensive
Responsibility	4.14	Highly Extensive
Exercise break	4.12	Highly Extensive
Reward for good behavior	4.13	Highly Extensive
Overall	4.14	Highly Extensive

In Table 2, examination stress had the highest domain mean ($M = 4.16$), followed by financial difficulties and relationship difficulties ($M = 4.14$ each), and family problems ($M = 4.12$). The overall mean was 4.14, described as highly extensive.

Table 2. Summary of social difficulties as perceived by public elementary school teachers.

Domain	Mean	Descriptive level
Family problems	4.12	Highly Extensive
Examination stress	4.16	Highly Extensive
Financial difficulties	4.14	Highly Extensive
Relationship difficulties	4.14	Highly Extensive
Overall	4.14	Highly Extensive

Table 3 shows that discipline stratagems of teachers had a high correlation with student social difficulties, $r = .763$, $p = 0.00$. Based on the decision rule used in the study, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected.

Table 3. Correlation results.

Variables	r	p-value
Discipline stratagems of teachers and student social difficulties	0.763	0.000

Table 4 presents the regression result. The reported beta coefficient was .698, with $R^2 = .758$ and $p = 0.00$. Based on the decision rule used in the study, the null hypothesis that none of the domains of discipline stratagems significantly influenced student social difficulties was rejected.

Table 4. Regression analysis of discipline stratagems of teachers as predictor of student social difficulties.

Model	Beta Coefficient	Df	R ²	p-value	Decision on H0
Regression	.698	3	.758	0.00	Reject
Residual		136			
Total		139			

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that teachers reported a highly extensive use of discipline stratagems across all measured domains. Discipline with dignity obtained the highest mean among the domains, which suggests that teachers perceived calm, private, and respectful correction as a common part of classroom practice. This result is consistent with contemporary views of classroom management that place teacher communication, fairness, and relationship quality at the center of behavior support. Karasova and Nehyba (2023) noted that student-centered teacher responses to behavior can support motivation, responsibility, and interpersonal climate. In the same way, Korpershoek et al. (2016) found that classroom management programs and strategies can improve student behavioral and social-emotional outcomes when teachers use structured and preventive practices.

The high rating for responsibility also deserves attention. The items under this domain reflect the use of assignments, reports, demonstrations, and leadership roles to help students practice responsible behavior. This is important because responsibility oriented discipline shifts the focus from obedience alone to participation and self-regulation. AERO (2023) emphasized that classrooms become more predictable and supportive when teachers model expectations, maintain routines, and affirm that students can succeed. In the present findings, the use of group leadership roles may indicate that teachers view responsibility as a behavior shaping strategy rather than only an academic task.

Exercise break was also rated highly extensive, although it had the lowest domain mean among the discipline stratagems. This pattern may suggest that teachers use movement based breaks, but with slightly less frequency than verbal, relational, or reward based strategies. This is plausible in elementary settings where teachers often manage restlessness, fatigue, and attention shifts during the school day. While exercise break was not the strongest domain in the study, its inclusion remains relevant because classroom behavior can be affected by physical readiness, energy level, and the need for short transitions. As a discipline stratagem, it is less punitive and may help prevent behavioral issues before they escalate.

Reward for good behavior was rated highly extensive, with cooperation as the highest item. This suggests that teachers often recognize desirable conduct and use

rewards to reinforce classroom norms. Rewards can support young learners when they are tied to clear expectations and meaningful feedback. However, the discussion must also recognize that rewards are most helpful when they do not replace intrinsic motivation or weaken student autonomy. The broader classroom management literature favors balanced approaches in which reinforcement is paired with relationships, routines, and student responsibility (Korpershoek et al., 2016; Karasova & Nehyba, 2023). Thus, the high rating for reward practices should be interpreted as one part of a wider discipline system rather than a stand-alone solution.

Student social difficulties were also rated highly extensive. Examination stress had the highest mean among the social difficulty domains. This indicates that teachers frequently observe learner difficulty related to illness, lack of sleep, lack of preparation, hunger, late arrival, or panic during examinations. In elementary schools, these concerns may reflect broader welfare and home based conditions that affect readiness for assessment. The finding also points to the need for schools to integrate academic support with learner well-being support. If assessment related stress is common, teachers and school heads may need to review pacing, preparation routines, feeding concerns, attendance, and guidance referral practices.

Financial difficulties and relationship difficulties were also rated highly extensive. These results show that teachers perceived economic strain and relational concerns as visible in students' school experience. Financial hardship may affect materials, nutrition, attendance, concentration, and confidence, while relationship difficulties may affect social participation and emotional safety. Allen et al. (2018) identified school belonging as a key factor in student adjustment, and teacher support was one of its strongest correlates. This supports the view that teachers can serve as protective adults when students experience instability outside the classroom.

Family problems were also rated highly extensive, although one item, drug addiction among family members, received a low rating. The contrast suggests that teachers commonly perceived family related concerns such as depression, illness, favoritism, and communication problems, but did not report drug addiction in the family as equally frequent. This distinction is important for program design. Family problems should not be treated as a single uniform category. Schools may need differentiated responses, including parent communication, referral systems, guidance support, and classroom sensitivity to children who carry home related stress into the school day.

The significant high correlation between discipline stratagems and student social difficulties, $r = .763$, $p = 0.00$, is one of the central findings. Statistically, the result indicates that higher reported use of discipline stratagems was associated with higher reported levels of student social difficulties. This should not be read as proof that discipline stratagems cause social difficulties, because the design was correlational. A more cautious interpretation is that teachers who encounter more social difficulties may also employ more discipline stratagems, or that schools with more active behavior support systems may be more aware of learner social concerns. The result establishes association, not causation.

The regression result likewise indicated a significant influence of discipline stratagems on student social difficulties, $\beta = .698$, $R^2 = .758$, $p = 0.00$. Because the study used non-experimental data, the word influence must be interpreted statistically rather than causally. The model suggests that discipline stratagems accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in reported student social difficulties as encoded in the study data. This reinforces the need to examine discipline practices and learner welfare concerns together, not as separate areas of school life.

The findings have practical implications for public elementary schools. First, teacher development should include classroom management approaches that emphasize dignity, calm communication, predictable routines, and student responsibility. Second, schools should align discipline programs with guidance, child protection, and learner support systems because social difficulties often have family, financial, academic, or peer related roots. Third, school heads should avoid an overly punitive interpretation of discipline data. Cribb Fabersunne et al. (2023) warned that exclusionary discipline is linked with harmful educational outcomes, which makes supportive and preventive approaches more suitable for young learners.

Overall, the study contributes district level evidence that discipline stratagems and student social difficulties are closely connected in public elementary schools. The high ratings across both variables suggest that teachers recognize discipline as part of their daily work and also observe multiple learner concerns that affect behavior. The relationship and regression results further support a school wide approach where classroom management, teacher training, guidance services, and family engagement are coordinated. Such coordination may help schools move from mere control of behavior toward a more developmental form of discipline that protects learning, dignity, and social adjustment.

5. Conclusion

The study found that discipline stratagems of teachers in public elementary schools were highly extensive in terms of discipline with dignity, responsibility, exercise break, and reward for good behavior. Student social difficulties were also highly extensive in terms of family problems, examination stress, financial difficulties, and relationship difficulties. Discipline stratagems of teachers had a high and significant relationship with student social difficulties, and the regression model indicated a significant statistical influence of discipline stratagems on student social difficulties. These findings show that classroom discipline and learner social concerns are closely related in the public elementary school setting.

The results support the need for teacher development programs that strengthen respectful classroom management, responsibility based discipline, appropriate reinforcement, and learner support strategies. They also point to the importance of school based systems that connect classroom discipline with guidance, family communication, and child welfare responses. Future studies may use mixed methods,

learner level data, and school level comparison to clarify how specific discipline practices affect student behavior and social adjustment over time.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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